

CUYAHOGA VALLEY TOWPATH TRAIL CENSUS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER - SEPTEMBER 2021

(CVTTC)

HISTORY & FACTS of the SEPTEMBER CENSUS

SEPTEMBER	12-YEAR TOTALS of SPECIES / INDIVIDUALS							
2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
60 / 592	52 / 524	71 / 1,167	56 / 935	56 / 2,108	58 / 503	68 / 2,446	60 / 852	56 / 722
2019	2020	2021						
59 / 1,441	67 / 591	61 / 748						

Most Species seen in September : 71 Species on 09/08/2012.

Most Individual Birds seen in September : 2,446 Total Birds on 09/02/2016.

Fewest Species seen in September : 52 Species on 09/03/2011.

Fewest Individual Birds seen in September : 503 Total Birds on 09/05/2015.

Species Average in September : 60.3 Total Species.

Total Individuals Average in September : 1,052.4 Total Birds.

Lowest Temperature on September Census : 51-degrees F on 09/01/17.

Highest Temperature on September Census : 95-degrees F on 09/03/2011.

Longest Time Afield on September Census : 10 hours & 30 minutes on 09/03/20.

Shortest Time Afield on September Census : 5 hours & 50 minutes on 09/03/2011.

LAST SEPTEMBER'S FIELD REPORT

09/03/20	TOTAL SPECIES:	67	START / END TIME:	7:05am - 5:35pm		
	TOTAL BIRDS:	591	TIME AFIELD:	10:30	FT. MI.:	14.65
ROUTE:	Red Lock Trailhead south to Merriman Valley, with a side trek over to the Stanford Hostel and stops at Trail Mix in Peninsula and Szalay's Sweet Corn Farm & Market for lunch.					
TEMP.:	63F ~ 82F ~ 81F	OBSERVERS:	John Henry and Douglas W. Vogus; and Michelle Vogus (Botzum Trailhead to Merriman Valley).			
CONDITIONS:	Cloudy and cool early, with low humidity; turning warmer with occasional southerly breezes; warm and sunny from 1:30pm until end of census.					
TRAIL CONDITIONS:	Good.	RIVER CONDITIONS:	Slightly above normal and muddy.			

FOUR YEARS AGO on the TOWPATH TRAIL

September 01, 2017 was a great day for Osprey migration as we had four different birds seen along the census route. We had a single bird over the Cuyahoga River south of Ira Rd. and three birds soaring together above Merriman Valley at the end of the census.

This topped our previous high of just single birds seen on nine other occasions, and, at the time, was our first ever September record on the monthly census. Although quite common around the Portage Lakes area, they are simply fly-overs passing through the Cuyahoga Valley. But, that big muddy river just keeps getting cleaner! Stay tuned...

SEPTEMBER 2021's BIRD SPECIES PROFILE

OSPREY (*Pandion haliaetus*)

DESCRIPTION:

Known to many as the "Fish Hawk," the Osprey is one of the easier raptors for the beginning birder to identify, with a unique combination of size, shape, pattern, and even voice. Usually found in the immediate vicinity of water, the Osprey is a large raptor that is dark above and white below. The head has a white crown and forehead, offset by a dark eye line that connects to the dark nape. The bill is dark and strongly hooked. The throat, neck, and underparts are white. The back and upperwings are dark brown, appearing black at a distance. The tail is barred and the eyes orange to yellow. Most have some streaking on the upper breast, with females usually showing heavier markings, forming a "necklace."

In a full soar, the wings appear uncommonly long, thin, and lanky. The wings are more tapered than those of a Bald Eagle without actually being tapered. The "arm" is broad and full throughout its length, but the "hand" is long, narrow, and almost delicate. The "arm" and "hand" appear not to belong to each other on the same wing.

During migration, Ospreys are more commonly seen gliding along a ridge or between thermals. In this attitude, the wing shape is so unlike that of other birds of prey that it overshadows all other field marks. The wing is sharply crooked; the elbows are thrust forward in front of the head; and the "hands" are swept back. With its deeply slotted flight feathers, the bird resembles a long-winged scarecrow with its arms thrown over the crossbar of a supporting post. Seen head-on, the bird holds its wings in an exaggerated, uplifted bow completely above the horizontal axis. The bird flies almost as if it were riding on the palms of its hands. An Osprey in flight, with its "arms" slightly uplifted, its long, narrow "hands" angled downward, and its long, narrow wings crooked sharply back, suggests a large, lanky dark-backed gull. This resemblance to a gull exists no matter how the bird is flying or soaring.

LENGTH: 22" to 25"

WINGSPAN: 58" to 72"

WEIGHT: Males: 2 lbs. 10 oz. to 3 lbs. 8 & 1/2 oz., and Females: 2 lbs. 12 oz. to 4 lbs. 3 & 3/4 oz.

VOICE: Distinctive whistles that are easy to mimic, categorized into 5 types: Guard, Alarm, Excited, Screaming, and Solicitation.

HABITS: The Osprey is a strikingly handsome, large raptor with its own evolutionary specialty - diving for fish. Bald Eagles can capture fish that swim close to the surface by flying low and casting their talons in a sweeping arc. But only the Osprey dives, talons first, often immersing itself completely in pursuit of prey. A hunting Osprey will fly to a likely piece of water and will hover with a fisherman's patience until prey has been sighted. When the time is right, the bird folds up and dives, head first, with its wings swept back behind the tail. The bird adjusts for the angle of the dive to compensate for the refraction in the image of the the fish swimming below the surface. Just before hitting the water, the Osprey throws its feet forward in a four-cornered net of talons. In more than half the cases, an adult Osprey will emerge with fish in tow. Rises from water with fish gripped in both feet, pauses in midair to shake water from plumage, and arranges fish with head pointed forward, which reduces its resistance to air.

Feeds almost exclusively on fishes and has been reported to carry fish up to 4 lbs. or more. Prey other than fish is infrequently taken. A snake swimming across the surface is fair game, and other reports include frogs, small birds such as storm-petrels, sandpipers, and ducks - possibly when fish are not available - and small rodents. Muskrat skulls have been found in Osprey nests, but that may be due to the fact that Ospreys adorn their nests with all sorts of flotsam and jetsam. More on that later.

HABITAT: *In summer along lakes, rivers, seacoasts of U.S., Canada, and Alaska; local, uncommon, or widely scattered over most of range. Even in migration it usually follows water of interior river valleys and seashore. Spends much of its time near water perched on dead snag of tree or on rocks. Very active during breeding season and is easily observed in right habitat.*

NESTING: *Either singly or in loose colonies, as long as the territory permits. The nests, made mostly of sticks and driftwood, are impressive structures. Pairs add material to them year after year until a storm destroys the structure or a supporting base collapses under the sheer weight of building material. Osprey nests have been found with all sorts of other components, just about anything that washes up on the shores of lakes, rivers, and beaches. These include conch shells, dessicated carcasses of Great Blue Herons, nylon webbing from beach chairs, plastic garbage bags, discarded toys, corn stalks, bones, etc. My friend, Jim Reyda, observed a nest on a cell tower by the Home Depot on Arlington Rd. in south Akron that had a softball in it!*

EGGS: *In Florida - December to April; Baja California, Mexico - January to April; in temperate parts of the U.S. and Canada - April to June. Two to four eggs, usually three. A.C. Bent called them, "the handsomest of all hawks' eggs"; white to pink or cinnamon, heavily blotched and spotted with dark browns. **INCUBATION:** Begins with first egg laid, and usually by female in North America; female does not catch fish herself during incubation but depends on male to feed her; incubation period 32 to 33 days; young make first flights at 51 to 59 days after hatching, and young, after first flight, fly awkwardly back to nest. Banding shows that some young Ospreys return to natal area when two years old, or in third year and do not breed until age 3.*

RANGE: *The Osprey is of just one species but is one of the most widely distributed birds in the world! Lives in Europe, Asia, south to Spain, northern Africa, south China, the East Indies and Australia, and on some of the southwest Pacific Islands; also in Western Hemisphere, but within defined limits of North America, does not breed south of Baja California, Mexico. Being a hunter in need of open water, northern populations migrate to warmer climates in winter.*

STATUS: *Ospreys became the poster child for species loss due to pesticide use in the 1950's and 1960's, as Osprey populations plummeted, especially along the Atlantic Coast, receiving federal protection. The banning of DDT and related substances in the U.S., along with conservation programs, including nest-platform construction, have resulted in spectacular comebacks. Discarded fishing line and lures are a threat resulting in the loss of many young birds.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *On the Atlantic Coast, Ospreys originally nested on the forested barrier islands? Early in the settlement of the coast, colonists and seamen clearcut the islands and created the dunes and bayberry thickets that we know today. Ospreys retreated to the broad marshes that lie between the beaches and the mainland. They nested in the gnarled remains of trees on cedar islands that were overlooked by lumber-hungry sea captains, whose eyes were on the European markets.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *The Osprey differs from all other diurnal birds of prey - eagles, hawks, kites, falcons, for example - in certain parts of its internal structure, and outwardly in its long, strong claws, curved about one-third of a circle, and completely round (not concaved and grooved beneath), in equal length of its toes (not unequal as in other raptors), and in the heavy, peculiarly scaled (reticulated) tarsus (shank) and short, dense feathering of the thighs. The lower surface, or pads, of the toes are covered with spicules, which help it hold slippery fishes. Also, it is the only hawk that has the outer toe reversible, as in owls. This enables it to grasp its prey with two toes in front and two in the back. Its plumage is compact, which helps blunt its impact and reduces wetting when it plunges into water.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *The Osprey's scientific name, "Pandion haliaetus" can be broken down into: Pandionidae (pan-die-ON-ih-dee) for Pandion, in Greek legend the King of Athens, father of Philomena and Procne. Haliaetus (hal-ih-ay-EE-tus), is Latin for sea eagle.*

DID YOU KNOW?: *The abundance codes on the next page are kind of a fluid situation? Due to the Ohio Division of Wildlife's reintroduction program, one could argue that the Osprey numbers in the Portage Lakes area borders on "common" or "abundant." Besides manmade wooden platform structures, Ospreys have taken over high tension line towers, billboards, cell towers (favored), telephone pole crossbars, etc., due to the prime fishing habitat in the region. The next time you're in the Portage Lakes area, check even the tallest of cell towers and you will see the large piles of sticks as proof!*

DID YOU KNOW?: *There are reports from fishermen of catching large fish with skeletons of Ospreys attached to their backs? Proof that they occasionally take on quarry too large to carry, with the fish dragging them under while still attached!*



Fish monger - the powerful Osprey has a very good success rate when it comes to catching fish.

(photo by: David Brown)

Abundance Codes on the graphs below indicate the best time of year to find the Osprey in Northeast Ohio.

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.
		ooorr	rrrrruuuu	uuuurrrrr	rrrrrrrrrrr
Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
rrrrrrrrrrr	rruuuuuuu	uuuuuuuuu	uuurrrrrrr	rrroooooo	

- CCCCCCC** = Common to Abundant. Frequently encountered in this region during this time of year.
- UUUUUUUU** = Uncommon. Occurs regularly during this time of year but not frequently detected.
- RRRRRRRRR** = Rare. These birds can occur more or less annually but are easily missed in their scant presence in the region.
- OOOOOOO** = Occasional. Limited history in this region and are not to be expected.
- ******* = Accidental. Few records in the past 60 years. Not expected in this region during this time of year.
- |||||||||||** = Fluctuating Abundance. May occur some years yet absent other years. Irruptive or overwintering birds.

History of the Osprey on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census 2010 ~ present.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
JAN.								
FEB.								
MAR.								
APR.								
MAY		1					1	1
JUN.			1					
JUL.		1						
AUG.		1						1
SEP.								4*
OCT.	1				1			
NOV.								
DEC.								

	2018	2019	2020	2021
JAN.				
FEB.				
MAR.				
APR.				
MAY	1		1	1
JUN.				
JUL.	1			
AUG.				
SEP.			2	1
OCT.				
NOV.				
DEC.				

DID YOU KNOW?: The U.S.

Air Force named one of their aircraft for the Osprey? The CV-22 Osprey is a tiltrotor aircraft that combines the vertical landing qualities of a helicopter with the long-range, fuel efficiency and speed characteristics of a turboprop aircraft. The mission of the CV-22 Osprey is to conduct long-range infiltration, exfiltration, and resupply missions for special operations forces. The CV-22 takes off vertically and, once airborne, the nacelles (engine and prop-rotor group) on each wing can rotate into a forward position. Each unit costs about \$90 million!

- *** = HIGHEST COUNT TOTAL ON CENSUS.
- BOLD #** = HIGHEST COUNT FOR THAT YEAR.

SEPTEMBER'S DID YOU KNOW?

DID YOU KNOW?:

What are the odds that two species of birds would be named in honor of two different men, with the same last name? Bernard Rogan Ross (1827-1874) was the Chief Factor of the Hudson Bay Company, whom John Cassin honored in 1861 by naming for him the small goose sent to Cassin by Ross from Great Slave Lake, Canada. Bernard Ross was a correspondent with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., to which he contributed a considerable amount of bird specimens. He was born in Londonderry, Ireland, died in Toronto. We now have the Ross's Goose, which we have a single record of on the Cuyahoga Valley Towpath Trail Census, yet still no record of the much more common, relatively, Snow Goose.

DID YOU KNOW?:

For the excitement sake of "The Towpath Traveler," we'll focus on Sir James Clark Ross (1800-1862), nothing against Bernard, but this Ross was a "Sir" afterall! He was a British explorer and Arctic navigator, for whom the Ross's Gull (*Rhodostethia rosea*) was named. He accompanied William Edward Parry, English explorer of the Arctic, on four expeditions there between 1819 and 1827.

In June of 1823, on Parry's second voyage to the Arctic to seek the Northwest Passage, Ross shot the first specimen of this gull known to science, on eastern Melville Peninsula, in the Canadian Arctic. The old scientific name, "*Larus rossii*," also honored Ross. However, it was later discovered that in 1824, William MacGillivray, the Scottish ornithologist, had already given the bird the species name of "*roseus*," (now "*rosea*"), and because of the law of priority of date of publication of scientific names, MacGillivray's species name stands. A classic case of the early birder, or at least prompt birder, gets the worm.

DID YOU KNOW?:

On the second Arctic expedition of his uncle, Sir John Ross, he located the north magnetic pole on June 01, 1831? His own Antarctic expedition of 1839-43 was undertaken to conduct magnetic observations and to reach the south magnetic pole. Commanding the "Erebus" and "Terror," he discovered the Ross Sea in 1841, and, while sailing toward the position assigned to the magnetic pole, also discovered Victoria Land.

DID YOU KNOW?:

Ross led an expedition (1848-49) to find and rescue Sir John Franklin, who was lost and died in the Arctic in search of the North Pole and the Northwest Passage?

DID YOU KNOW?:

Normally associated with coastal habitats, river deltas, and marshy tundra in Arctic areas, Ross's Gulls seldom wander to more temperate climates? In North America, they are most frequently observed as fall visitors to the Arctic coast of Alaska, although a few pairs attempted to nest near Churchill, Manitoba, during the 1980's and 1990's. The first North American record for the United States south of Alaska and northern Canada was of one seen in adult winter plumage along the Merrimack River at Salisbury along the Massachusetts coast from December 07, 1974 to May 06, 1975. Locally, on December 14, 1997, Craig Holt observed an adult at Conneaut, Ohio. No photographs were obtained, but the bird was carefully described. On November 15, 1998, Larry Rosche and Ray Hannikman discovered a Ross's Gull among a flock of Bonaparte's Gulls at Headlands Beach State Park in Lake County. The gull remained offshore for several hours and was studied by numerous observers, but drifted out of view once the strong northwesterly winds subsided in late morning.



British explorer and Arctic and Antarctic navigator James Clark Ross accomplished much in his 61 years.

(photo courtesy of: Britannica.com)



The Ross's Gull, at only 13 & 1/2-inches in length, is one of the smallest and rarest of all North American gulls.

(photo by: Tom Johnson)

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